

Childhood's End

The Half Moon rises in the cloudless January sky,
And while I stand here dreaming the whole world is passing by,
The soft blue background with neither a plane nor bird in sight
Is fading into darkness as the evening turns to night,
You've always been a dreamer: I breathe softly to myself,
Perhaps that is why after so long you're still on the shelf.

I look back at the years I've lived and wonder where they've gone,
And think of places never visited and things not done,
Five years ago: where was I then? In Yorkshire. And before?
A short while spent in Manchester, and then I think back more;
I lived in London for three years, or longer, I've lost track,
And I try to think of before, to roll the decades back,
Back to the time when I was young, innocent and naïve,
Back to my boyhood, back into my world of make-believe.

When I was eight or nine the school caretaker said to me:
These are the best days of your life, schooldays. I thought: Really?
But now I see he spoke with wisdom for surely they were,
At least except for the short happy time I spent with her.
But she is gone now from my life and once more I'm alone,
No lover, no friends, family, no money and no home.
Stop feeling sorry for yourself, I say, and turn again
To reminisce of times long gone, of happiness and pain.
Yes, they were good times when I was a boy, and though they're gone,
They'll ever be a part of me, fond mem'ries linger on.

Those times at boarding school when we went camping at weekends,
Or when I used to go bird nesting with my two best friends,
I had so many different eggs bar kestrel, owl and lark,
We'd go hunting them everywhere: the woods, the farm, the park,
I think that was my first obsession, or was that com-ics?
Always Marvel, never DC, some very clever strips,
The heroes all seemed plausible, they didn't always win,
The villains were too, and the story lines were never thin.
I think my favourite hero must have been Spiderman,
I read so many I must have been Marvel's biggest fan:
Fantastic Four, the Hulk, the Ant-Man, X-Men, Dr Doom,
And crazy sound effects like biff, kapow, kerzap and zoom.

At one time I had over two hundred until one day
I lit a fire and burned the lot, just why, I couldn't say.
Perhaps I thought I'd outgrown them, but 'twas a foolish thing,
Years later I realised how valuable they might have been.
It's strange the things that seem so important when you're a lad,
The egg collecting fever for two whole years gripped me bad,
But like comics before them I slowly outgrew that phase,
And found something else just as pointless to fill up my days.

When I was very young my old man bought me a push bike,
With twenty inch wheels and white tyres, exactly to my like,
I had it for a long time then I bought a bigger one,
Cycling was often hard work, but with five gears was great fun.
One morning two of us got up at five thirty am,
And cycled all the way to the place called Little Britt-en,
The morning air was crisp and cold, the mist rose from the lake
Like something from a fairy tale, and I, just half awake
Felt: This is what life's all about; it made my spirit thrive,
And made a young adventurer feel great to be alive.
And other times when I, alone, explored the alleyways
Of unfamiliar towns a distance from my native Hayes,
Or when my brother and I walked such a colossal span
Through Yeading, Hayes and Cranford to Heathrow to see our Gran.

I often stayed with my grandparents in the holidays,
My grandmother was mad about me, and doting always,
I used to get away with murder when she was around,
Because her tolerance of this young urchin was unbound.
There was an orchard at the bottom of her garden path,
An outside toilet, no hot water and an old tin bath.
I used to go scrumping in the orchard sometimes for fruit,
And sneak into her scullery o'erladen with my loot.
My Granddad taught me how to play crib, and my Aunt Nin, whist,
My Old Man taught me pontoon: buy a card, stick, bust or twist.
'Tis strange but I remember oh so many good times now,
Yet there were times not so good, I remember them, and how.
I always seemed to be the odd one out in class at school,
Top of the form in most subjects, but still played for a fool.

Bad times are best forgotten, but the good ones weren't so rare,
Good times, bad times: we've each and every one of us our share,
And though for me the bad times always did outweigh the good,
I still would turn the clock back twenty odd years if I could.

The world seemed so much bigger then, and all was black and white,
But now it seems a smaller place with so much grey in sight.
Yes, they were good times when I was a boy, and though they're gone,
They'll ever be a part of me, fond mem'ries linger on.

I watch the Moon, it's shining now the sky has turned to black,
I blink, slowly the vision fades, reality floods back.
I try to think: when did this young boy turn into a man?
I still have many dreams, they haven't been turned to sand.
It's hard to tell, but though it's always good to reminisce,
There's still a full life yet to live before the great abyss.

Waste no more time, save up some money, go and see the world,
Do all the things you wanted but could not when still a child.
And if you can't do all of them, just close your eyes and dream,
Dream of the time when you were young, innocent and naïve.
Yes, they were good times when I was a boy, and though they're gone,
They'll ever be a part of me, fond mem'ries linger on.